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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000671

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [EU](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPALI MAOISTS MEET WITH EU MISSION HEAD

REF: (A) KATHMANDU 0621

Classified By: AMB MICHAEL E. MALINOWSKI. REASON: 1.5(B,D).

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SUMMARY

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[11.](#) (C) The head of the European Union office in Kathmandu broke ranks with his diplomatic colleagues and met with Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai and other Maoist leaders in Kathmandu on April 10. The EU Charge justified his "spontaneous" decision to meet the insurgent leader on humanitarian grounds, in order to stress the importance of allowing EU-sponsored development work to proceed unhindered in the countryside. He also argued that since he does not hold the rank of Ambassador, his meeting did not confer undue legitimacy on the insurgents. While other diplomatic missions contacted by the Maoists, including our own Embassy, have not yet responded to Maoist requests for similar meetings, all agree that any meeting should take place below the level of Ambassador or Charge. End summary.

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EU TETE-A-TETE WITH MILITANTS

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[12.](#) (SBU) Maoist insurgent leaders, who have been seeking meetings with the heads of the US, UK, Indian, Chinese, and EU Missions in Kathmandu for the past week (reftel), scored their first victory when Charge d'Affaires Rudiger Wenk, who heads the Delegation of the European Commission in Nepal, met Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai in Kathmandu on April 10. Bhattarai, named by the insurgents to coordinate dialogue with the Government of Nepal (GON), was accompanied to the meeting by fellow Central Committee members Ram Bahadur "Badal" Thapa and Krishna Mahara. A gaggle of reporters followed the Maoists to the EU building, but were prevented from entering the compound.

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MEETING DEFENDED ON PROTOCOL, HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS

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[13.](#) (C) Wenk told the DCM the following day that his decision to meet the Maoists was a "spontaneous" one that he defended on both humanitarian and protocol grounds. He felt it important to communicate to the Maoist leadership the difficulty of continuing EU-sponsored development projects in rural areas affected by the insurgency. Noting that the Maoists had burned a number of EU project vehicles in some areas, he added that he had wanted to meet with them for some time on the matter but could not obtain clearance from the EU hierarchy to do so. When he was contacted with the request on the morning of April 10, he thus decided to use the opportunity to press those points. (Note: Wenk said he had been informally contacted before the day of the meeting through "leftist channels," but had not received the same form letter as had the US, UK, Indian and Chinese Embassies asking for an appointment. End note.)

[14.](#) (C) Because he does not hold the rank of Ambassador, Wenk further reasoned, his meeting the Maoists would not confer undue status or legitimacy on the insurgents. Because the European Commission is "strictly apolitical," he contended, the Maoists cannot exploit the meeting for political ends. He added that he provided his interlocutors with a detailed explanation of the EU's organization--differentiating between the EU and the European Commission and pointing out that the EU Ambassador is in New Delhi and that Wenk is Charge only for the Commission--to underscore his comparatively modest rank. (Note: These subtleties were apparently lost on the Maoists, whose press statements after the meeting crowed that the "EU envoy" had met them. End note.) He did not alert the EU Ambassador in New Delhi, EU headquarters, the Chiefs of Mission of EU member nations in Kathmandu, or the GON before meeting with the Maoists. Wenk added that the British Ambassador was angry (as are we) when he learned of the meeting through the local press. He promised to brief the Foreign Ministry on the meeting next week.

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MAOISTS' MESSAGE

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15. (C) Wenk described the atmosphere of the meeting as "friendly" and "relaxed." The Maoists' main message, according to Wenk, was their dissatisfaction with the GON's alleged lack of cooperation in the peace process. They also expressed concern about "foreign intervention" in Nepal, particularly military assistance. Wenk said he replied that the EU Parliament had passed a resolution in 2002 offering to mediate in the conflict between the Maoists and the GON, but had received no response. His Maoist interlocutors blamed India and China for squelching any efforts at third-party mediation. (Comment: Wenk either ignores or is ignorant of the sensitivities regarding international mediation here. The GON--and the Indians--have a well-known position in rejecting international mediation at this time.) The DCM asked if Wenk had pressed the Maoists to work with the Parliamentary parties. Bhattarai had assured him that the Maoists support multiparty democracy, Wenk answered, but would never join the current interim government.

16. (C) Wenk told the DCM he did not rely solely on previously cleared EU guidance in his discussion with the Maoists. (According to the UK Ambassador, this guidance stipulated that any discussion take place below the level of Ambassador; that EU representatives be in "listening mode"; that discussion be limited to development topics; and that there be no publicity.) For example, when the Maoists told him that they intended to publicize the meeting, he acquiesced, stipulating only that they provide the press with an accurate read-out. (Note: The Maoists appear, for the most part, to have done so. According to Wenk, the only inaccuracy--so far--in the press account was the assertion that he had "pledged every kind of assistance to the rebels" in their efforts toward peace. End note.) The DCM asked if Wenk pursued with his interlocutors their frequent threats to break the ceasefire and return to violence if the GON fails to meet their demands. Wenk replied that he understands the Maoists' frustration, charging that the GON is trying to "starve them out" by delaying the beginning of negotiations.

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OTHER EMBASSIES' REACTIONS  
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17. (C) Since receiving the Maoists' request (reftel), we have polled other Embassies to hear their views on meeting the Maoists. Like us, the British and Indians believe any meeting should take place at a mid-level. The UK Embassy has received clearance from FCO to hold a meeting at that level, but, like us, is in no hurry to respond to the Maoist invitation. The Indians have not yet received guidance from New Delhi. The Chinese are not contemplating a meeting at any level because, according to First Secretary Cheng Ji, they have no wish to interfere in Nepal's internal affairs. The Japanese have not been requested to meet.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) The Maoists have been publicizing in the media their requests to meet with heads of prominent foreign missions, and have been more than a little chagrined at the cool reception to their invitations. The meeting with Wenk, which was not briefed to the GON in advance and was not sanctioned either by the EU hierarchy, his EU supervisor in New Delhi, or by EU member Embassies in Nepal, has provided the Maoists some face-saving cover. Wenk's diplomatic irresponsibility, his apparent sympathy for the Maoists' viewpoint and his acceptance of their political pretensions at face value betray a surprising naivete about the insurgents' real aims and intentions. We will continue to coordinate closely with other diplomatic missions on any eventual meetings.  
MALINOWSKI